

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 12, 2004

The Honorable Ann Veneman  
Secretary of Agriculture  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Veneman:

We understand that on Wednesday, November 10, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service confirmed the presence of soybean rust on soybean leaf samples from two test plots in Louisiana.

As you well know, soybean rust is a devastating disease which has caused yield losses of up to 80 percent in some parts of the world. The discovery of this disease in the continental United States, which until now was the last major soybean growing area without soybean rust, is very troubling. Because soybean rust spores are easily transported by wind and can spread rapidly over wide distances, we cannot ignore the prospect that additional cases of soybean rust may still be discovered in the United States.

Fortunately, losses to soybean producers will not occur this year because most of the soybean harvest is complete. We urge U.S.D.A. to act aggressively in the coming months to ensure measures are in place to protect the soybean crop prior to 2005.

First, we ask that you immediately determine the extent of the disease spread and investigate its transmission. Second, we also ask that you support increases in funding for research to develop plant tolerance and resistance to soybean rust. And finally, we encourage you to develop an aggressive public education program to assist producers in identifying soybean rust so that it can be treated as early as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

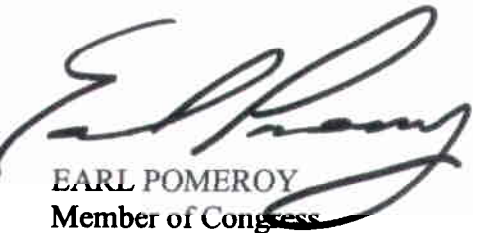
Sincerely,



KENT CONRAD  
United States Senate



BYRON L. DORGAN  
United States Senate



EARL POMEROY  
Member of Congress